AN Epistle to Friends

Concerning

The PRESENT and SUCCEEDING

TIMES.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

Being a Faithful Exhortation and Warning to all Friends, who profess the Truth, to beware of the manifold Wiles of the Enemy, and to stand Armed in the Light of the Lord God of Heaven and Earth, against his Assaults, that so they may be ready to answer the Call and Requirings of the Lord.

Also, Something signified of the Misery of the Succeeding Times, that all may be prepared, and that the Evil Day may not overtake any at unawares, but such as turn away their Ear from Counsel.

By One who is a Traveller in the way of Peace, and hath Good will towards all Men, and more especially to the Houshold of Faith,

STEPHEN CRISP.

Let him that hath an Ear, hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches.

Printed in the Year 1666. and Reprinted for further Service in the Year 1679.

Th. L (21)

FRIEND;

WHoſoever thou art, that art travelling towards *Sion*, who art hungring and thirſting after Righteouſneſs, who art waiting upon the Lord for Strength to follow him fully, who art careful for nothing but to grow up unto the Lord in all Well-pleaſings, and in Faithfulneſs to ſtand approved to the Lord, over the Spirit of the World, and all that is in it; thou who art daily crying, *Waſh me, O Lord, waſh me thorowly, ſearch me and try me, and let no Evil Way, no Thought, no Word, no Work remain that may offend thee, or grieve thy Holy Spirit, but by the Power thereof ſubdue, bring down, caſt out all that is not of thy begetting: Yea, Lord,* ſaith the Upright in Heart, *Spare no Arrows, ſit thou as Refiners Fire, thorowly purge the Flower, burn up the Chaff and all Combuſtible Matter, remove all that can be ſhaken, that nothing may remain but that which can ſtand all Storms, that which cannot be moved, that which will hold out to the End, and in the End praiſe the God of Endleſs Mercies.*

'Tis for thee for whoſe ſake this enſuing Treatiſe is again Re-printed, and I queſtion not but thou wilt find and feel in it the Savour of Life, in which it was at firſt given forth; and its Service ſtill remains to thy Comfort and Encouragement.

Oh Friend! 'tis to him who through many Tribulations overcometh the World, and all things therein, that the promiſed Inheritance muſt be given; he

who is fitted and prepared muſt poſſeſs the Inheritance with the Saints in Light.

'Tis he that overcometh that ſhall eat the Fruit of the Tree of Life, that is in the midſt of the Paradiſe of God. 'Tis he or thoſe who are of the Seed of *Jacob*, that are wreſtling with the Lord till the Break of the Day, that have the New Name that none can know but he that hath it, over whom the ſecond Death can have no power.

'Tis He who ſhall not be hurt by the Breaking and Confuſion of Nations, but he ſhall have Power over it all; his Name ſhall not be blotted out of the Book of Life, who hath born a faithful Teſtimony for the Lord in his Day and Generation to the end, him will the Lord Jeſus confeſs before his Father, and he ſhall be a Pillar in God's Houſe, yea, he ſhall go no more forth: And though he hath formerly been as a Prodigal, who hath ſpent his Portion, yet cannot be ſatisfied with Huſks, but is conſtrained to return in the Senſe of his Poverty, being willing to be a Servant in his Father's Houſe, or any thing that the Lord will have him to be. 'Tis for him the fatted Calf is ſlain. 'Tis he on whom the beſt Robe, the Wedding Garment muſt be put on, and he muſt ſit at the Table of the Lord, and eat of the Feaſt of fat things, that is prepared upon the Mountain of Holineſs; 'tis he muſt drink the new Wine in the Kingdom of God; yea, ſuch may drink abundantly to their Souls Refreſhment; and theſe, as they have their Dependence upon the Lord, ſhall be made faithful unto Death, even the Death of every thing that is exalted above God's pure Witneſs, the Death of every

thing

thing that is contrary to God's pure holy Spirit in themſelves; theſe in this trying Day know not what thing the Lord will have for a Sacrifice, and are therefore given up to him in Body, Soul and Spirit, with whole Subſtance, even all they are and have, that God may be glorified in all, well knowing we are not our own.

'Tis for theſe, this little Flock, to whom in the good Pleaſure of the Father a Kingdom muſt be given; theſe who have put off the Old Man and his Deeds, who have received the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and walk in him; theſe who have ſeen the Emptineſs, yea, Nothingneſs of all things below, who have their Converſation in Heaven, and are ready to follow the Lord whereſoever he goeth; theſe are they who ſhall reſt in quiet, who ſhall witneſs that Peace that paſſeth Underſtanding, when the World with all its Glory and Riches ſhall be hurled hither and thither; theſe ſhall rejoyce in, and have Unity with that Power that Overturneth, Overturneth; and when Hypocrites ſhall be ſurprized, and the Sinners in *Sion* ſhall be afraid, theſe ſhall ſtand faſt in God, although as it were upon a Sea of Glaſs mingled with Fire; and the Lord God Omnipotent will put a new Song into their Mouthes, when they that know not the Lord, nor the Operation of his Power, ſhall have Weeping, and Wailing, and Gnaſhing of Teeth; theſe who have overcome the Worldly Spirit in themſelves, and knowing him ruling in them, who rules the Nations with an Iron Rod; theſe having the Moon under their Feet, ſhall be cloathed with the Sun; theſe having Oyl in their Veſ-

ſels,

ſels, as well as in their Lamps: theſe ſhall enter into the Chamber, where they ſhall be hid till the Calamity be over-paſt; theſe ſhall reſt in Peace under his Banner, that is Meek and Lowly, yet riding on in the Greatneſs of his Strength, conquering and to conquer, under whoſe Government there is and will be Peace and Plenty, whilſt Diſtreſs, Want, Anguiſh and Perplexity ſhall over-take all the Workers of Iniquity.

Now, to this God, that is able to do more abundantly for them that fear his Name and truſt in his Mercy, than we can ask or think, be all holy Praiſes and Obedience, Might, Majeſty and Dominion forever and ever, ſaith my Soul.

The 28th of the 4th Moneth, 1679. *M. F.*

AN Epistle to Friends Concerning The PRESENT and SUCCEEDING TIMES.

Dear Friends,

YOU whom the Lord hath reached unto in this the day of his Love, and hath made known the Way of Truth and Righteousness unto you, through the raising up of that holy living Witness of himself, that long lay hid and buried in you, and hath brought you to a secret feeling of something in you, that is worth the minding and regarding; and the Lord causing this to appear in the day of your seeking, as a Light, discovering Darkness, and its Power, by which ye were formerly holden, and given you by his Spirit a sense and secret Hope, that in this Light, the way of Deliverance was to be attained unto; this Hope made you not ashamed of the Light which before you hated, but you came to know and embrace it, even while others still hated it, and you for its sake; yet your Hearts being affected with the hope that did appear therein, could not but joyn unto it, as to make publick Profession of it for its own sake; and for no other ends or designs, or interest at all, but with resolution in that Light, to wait for the Salvation of God. Dear Friends, it is you aforementioned,

mentioned that both now, and for some Dayes and Weeks my Heart hath been deeply exercised concerning, even Night and Day; and the aboundings of the Fathers Love doth often overcome me, and draws me forth now to say and write these things unto you for your Admonition and Establishment; and indeed it is you who did thus rightly own the Way of Truth, and knew your believing to be the Gift and Mercy of God to your Souls, that I do aim at; for those that have taken up the profession of the precious Truth upon by respects and sinister ends, and but for Reasons propounded in their Carnal minds; though I do pity them, yet I have not much at this time to say to them, but this, *The Day shall declare them, and their Garments shall not hide them.*

But you, Oh my Friends, who had fellowship with us, in the deep travels of our beginnings, and did come to Truth the same way, and have known the power and vertue of it, many times overcoming you in your inward man, which hath made you cry out, *Lord, evermore give us of this Bread*; and hath made you as a watred Garden: Oh Friends, how shall I express or signifie unto you those Longings, those ardent Desires and earnest Breathings of my Soul, that you, even you, might abide to the end of all Tryals, and Tribulations, and Adversities, and might inherit that Crown of Immortality, that is in Christ Jesus our Lord, and might not by any means be bereft thereof; this is singly my travel in Body and Spirit, that you might be kept and preserved out of all the subtil Snares of the wicked one, which hunts for the Soul, even of those that have believed; And therefore in dear and tender love, I have a few things to write unto you for the clearing of my Conscience, and discharging my duty in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord give you all a tender and an understanding Heart, that both you and I may yet have cause daily to praise the Lord in the glorious Light of his Salvation, which he hath manifested amongst us, by the revealing his Son Jesus Christ, to whom belongs *Dominion, Honour and Glory forever, Amen.*

And

And first, dear Friends, it is in my Heart to put you in remembrance of that by which we were called & convinced, which as a Foundation Principle was laid in and among you, and it being unchangeable and unalterable in it self, doth therefore admit of no alteration or change in those that are rightly kept to it.

It was a Light which arose in our Hearts, and shined forth from God, the Father of Lights, carrying in its appearance the Nature and Property of God, both in its condemning Evil, which the Enemy had sown or planted in us; and owning, allowing, and justifying every thing that was good and honest, just and equal; even those Thoughts in our Hearts which were of turning towards the Lord, and seeking his Righteousness; these thoughts were justified and encouraged by the Light, and all the contrary discovered and judged, as they were brought to it to be tryed. Now this Light did our Souls rejoyce in, as they had good cause, though it took away our former Rejoycings; our Pleasures in Vanities and Iniquity died, our Glory in this World withered, our Friendship with the Sons of men decayed, and we stood in the Light and saw all these things, and were not sorry at it, but waited daily to see these things more and more brought to pass; neither was there a permitting our Thoughts to go out, how we might prevent those Dammages, or repair these Losses, but the Cross of Christ was indeed our glorying or rejoycing; and the Hope that was before us, did make us despise the Pleasures, Treasures and Honours, Friendship and Delights of this World; and in those dayes you grew into a feeling of the Heavenly Joy, where the Hundred-fold was witnessed in your Bosoms, and the Zeal of the Lord was kindled by his own Spirit in you, against whatsoever this Light of Jesus in the Conscience did witness against; and the Lord beheld your Integrity, and blessed you, and multiplyed you, and added to your strength and stature and then did the Fruits of this glorious Work abound among you, in three more general and special effects; by which effects, or by their continuance among you, let all now come to search and try themselves, that so, dear Friends, those that have continued faithful in them all, may

 persevere

perſevere in like manner to the end: and thoſe, who upon true ſearch do find, that they have failed, and fallen ſhort in all or any of them, may make haſte to Repent, and to turn to that which was the Root of them all, that they may not be found as fruitleſs and withered Branches, in the day that cometh, leſt they be cut off, and utterly conſumed, and blotted out from among the living Branches of the Vine; for a Day cometh that Truth will look into the Fig-Tree for Fruit, and Leaves will not defend it from the Curſe and Blaſting.

The three eſpecial Fruits that did ſpring forth from this bleſſed Root, and were and are to continue, and increaſe in us and amongſt us to the end, are theſe;

1. *Purity*, manifeſted in a Godly Converſation.

2. *Unity*, manifeſted in dear and tender Love one towards another.

3. *Faithfulneſs*, manifeſted in bearing a conſtant and faithful Teſtimony to the things we had received and believed, though it were unto great loſs and ſufferings.

And againſt all theſe doth the wicked one appear, to ſee if he can make you barren concerning them, and that with divers Wiles and Subtilties, that he may prevail on you, and not be known to be the Enemy, but might ſo overcome you, as that you might both ſubmit to him, and then plead for him and his Snares and Wiles, as being juſt, right, lawful, prudent, convenient, &c. But, Oh dear Friends, let all be watchful and diligent to wait in the ſence and true feeling of that Seed that never fell nor was beguiled, and you will (even the leaſt of you) ſee and comprehend his workings and tranſformings, and be delivered from them.

1. *Purity* and *Holineſs* was a Fruit in you, which doth yet flouriſh in many (*bleſſed be the Lord*) who are as watchful and careful to approve themſelves in obedience to the Light of Truth in their inward parts, as ever, and find as great a neceſſity both of trying and judging with its Judgment as ever; theſe having thus waited, have renewed their ſtrength unto this very day, and do mount up as upon the Wings of an Eagle; theſe are neither weary in running, nor faint they in their walk-

ing; But alas, Friends, even these do know with how great and manifold assaults they have been assaulted, and know and see with sorrow of Heart how the assault hath prevailed upon some, by working into the mind a secret Liberty, and supposed enlargedness, whereby a Carelesness hath entered some, and they having no Keeper, but the measure of Light revealed in their Hearts and Consciences, so soon as they came to be perswaded to slight the Reproofs of that, they soon erred; and this supposed Liberty entred, *that now, after so many Years strictness and circumspection, they should not need now to stand so straitly to try things and words as at first, because now a day of more Liberty was come*; and this Liberty secretly prevailed against that pure fear that once was placed in their Hearts, and against the very obedience of Truth, inwardly in the subjection of the mind, and then it became manifest outwardly; the Actions sometimes blame-worthy, the Words and Speech again corrupted, and run into the old Channel of the World, like them again, and the single pure Language, learned in the Light, in the time of their poverty and simplicity, almost lost and forgotten, and so the work of God which he wrought, in a manner laid waste; and then, when this Liberty is entred, and made use of as aforesaid, oftentimes a secret subtilty ariseth against the judgment of Truth, either from within, or from any outwardly, that are grieved with this loose and careless kind of speaking or acting, which subtilly leads to contend for it, or against the Judgment, telling the Creature, *why these things are but small things, and little things, and what, we must not strain at a Gnat, and such like*. Oh my Friends, beware of these evil Suggestions of the wicked one: How came they to be small and little things, seeing they were great things with us in the beginning? And how comes an offence of this Nature to be light now, seeing it was heavy in the beginning? Oh let not the greatest Mercies of our God so fill us, as to make us slight or forget the least obedience, but rather let the continuance of his Mercy the more quicken you up unto a Zeal for his Name and Truth in all things, to be found doing and speaking according to the Rule of Righteousness, which ye learned in the Light, in the day of

your being low and little, and then nothing will riſe up and be exalted in the multitude of Gods Mercies, but that holy Birth which lives in Purity when it is at higheſt; and ſo that Life of Righteouſneſs will ſhine forth more and more, which glorifies God and ſeeks his honour. Dear Friends, that ye might be ſo kept unto the end, is the breathing and travel of my Soul: and that where this neglect hath entred, and this aforeſaid Corruption either in Speech or Action is to be found, that ye would receive the Word of Exhortation in meekneſs and fear, in which it is written unto you, and may redeem the time, for the dayes are and ſhall be evil, and none will hold the myſtery of the Faith (that ſaves from falling in the evil day) but ſuch as do keep the pure and undefiled Conſcience, which none can do but by perſiſting and continuing in the daily Sanctification of the Spirit, and belief and obedience of the Truth.

A ſecond Fruit that was brought forth from this good Root, was *Unity* and *Love* one towards another; which, bleſſed be the Lord, is preciouſly preſerved in and among many to this very day; who are ſo ſenſible of the divers operations of Truth in them, to be all by one Spirit, that they are ſtill kept of one heart and mind, given up freely to ſerve the Lord in ſingleneſs of heart in their Generation; and are in this good work as Strengthners and Encouragers of one another; but notwithſtanding the Enemy hath been exceeding buſie to lay waſte and deſtroy this bleſſed effect alſo, and that under divers Pretences, which the Lord ſtill diſcovered by his own Light and Spirit in his People, who have ſingly waited upon him; but many have been his Wiles, ſometimes fitting and preparing Veſſels to riſe up in the fleſhly and ſenſual Wiſdom, and to traduce and bring in corrupt and evil Doctrines, to try who were not found in the Faith, that they may draw them aſide into a heat and zeal for ſomething which had not its Root in the Truth, and which they that abode in the Truth could not own, but judge and condemn in the Name of the Lord; which when ſuch ſaw, they took thereat occaſion of ſtriving to propagate and promote that which they ſaw withſtood; ſo having loſt ſubjection to the Spirit of Truth in themſelves, which would have kept them in

Unity in the Body; and having also lost and laid by their subjection to them that were over them in the Lord, they then grew stubborn and wilful, and proceeded in more zeal for that which stood in opposition to the Truth, then ever they did for the Truth it self; and these sometimes have prevailed to the subverting whole Households, and have turned several from the Faith and Simplicity that is in the Gospel, who, as well as those that subverted them, have lost the fellowship of the Saints, and the savour of Life either in themselves or others, and then the Enemy perswaded them, all are dead to the Life but themselves; and so they grow to have a tickling Joy in what they do and say, in obedience to that perverse and singular private Spirit, and so grow up to speak evil of Dignities, and are unruly, and dare to speak against Heaven, and them that dwell and inhabit in it, whom God makes to shine as Stars in the Firmament of his Power; but alas for them, my Soul pities them, when I see how they sport themselves with their own deceivings; but the Day of the Lord is among his People, which hath and doth make them and thier Spirit manifest, and their Fruits also have made them manifest.

Another Way that the Enemy seeks to break the Unity, and dissolve the Bond of Amity, is, by sowing a Seed of Jealousie and Prejudice in the Hearts of such in whom he can get an Entrance, that so they may cease from the true and unfeigned Love, and that upon a pretended Reason, because of this or that, which is supposed or imagined, in the evil part in themselves against others; giving heed to evil Thoughts and Surmises, which break forth many times in Whisperings and Tale-bearing; which though the thing supposed to be evil, were really so, yet this is not to be allowed or given way to among you, but to use plainness one towards another, and singleheartedness; and to shut out the Evil One in this his subtil appearance also. Oh dear Friends! remember how the Lord hath dealt with you, and deal you so one by another; he hath not sought Occasions against you, but hath long born and suffered, and exercised much Patience and Tenderness towards you; yet plainly reproving the Evil in you, and not treasuring it up against you. Oh

Friends!

Friends! be like-minded one towards another, that the Enemy of your Peace and Concord may be defeated, and you preserved entire to one Head, even to Christ Jesus; and ye may be one, and the Name of the Lord may be one among you; and that which tends to the making cold your Love, may be judged in all; and so Brotherly Love will continue with you to the End.

Another way which the Enemy works to scatter, and to bring from this Unity, is, by leading some who have believed, into some Sin and Iniquity, which the Body (that are in the Truth) are constrained to appear in Judgment against for the Truth's sake; and yet notwithstanding the Party so sinning, being above the Witness in themselves, which would bring them to own the Judgment of the Spirit of Christ in his Church, they exalt themselves above the Judgment, and seek to gain to them such whom they can enter by their words and Complaints, to take part with them against the Judgment, and those that passed it. Such were those whose words *did eat* (the Apostle said) *as a Canker*; of whom the Believers in those days were to be aware: for commonly such as have gone from the Power that should have kept them clean and upright, they will also turn against the Power in those that abide in it, especially if they be drawn forth to reprove and rebuke them: but let all such know, that's not the way to be renewed: and let all that take part with any that work Iniquity, know, that they do but defile their own Souls thereby, and do but rend themselves from that Body which they cannot prosper out of. And therefore, dear Friends, beware of joyning with that in your selves or in others, which the Power goeth against, let the Pretences be what they will; for that which doth Evil, will always be apteſt to sow evil Complainings of others; and such as are in the unsatisfied Murmurings against Judgment passed upon them, are much to be feared; for they thereby render themselves to be the more guilty, and yet the further from Repentance. But, dear Friends, watch unto that which gives you a living feeling of the living Body, which is the Church, that in all things you may demean your selves as true Members of it, serving one another in Love, and submitting your selves one unto another for the Lord's sake: That in all plainness

Plainneſs and Singleneſs, as becometh the Truth, you may ſeek to preſerve the Unity which the Enemy of Truth and Peace doth envy; ſo ſhall ye continue to ſtrengthen one anothers hands in every good work, and this ſhall tend to the weakening of the hands of your Enemies, who ſeek to divide you, that they might rule over you. Many other Deſigns doth the wicked one try, daily to break and divide, more than can now be named or here inſerted; but they are all out of the Light, and if you be in it, you will ſee them, and that will preſerve you; for its one, and did make us one, and will keep us to be of one heart and mind to the end, if we abide in it.

3. The third good affect which Truth did work in the beginning in them who did truly receive it, was *Zeal* & *Faithfulneſs* to God in the bearing Teſtimony to what was manifeſt, though through great Sufferings; in which, as Friends abide in the Root, they do daily encreaſe in Power, to fulfill the ſame Teſtimony: for the Mercy of the Lord doth engage them; and his anſwer of Peace in the midſt of their Tryals, doth Arm them and Encourage them, and they do hold out to the End; and for ſuch the Lord hath always made a way, better than they could have made for themſelves. Yet the Enemy hath in this Matter alſo been very buſie, and hath prevailed with ſome under divers Conſiderations, or rather Conſultations, which he hath propounded unto them. But, Oh Friends, be ye all watchful, and take heed leſt any of the Teſtimonies of Truth be laid waſte; for that which leads to be weary of bearing Witneſs to the Truth, and to lay it Waſte, the ſame will lay thee Waſte, and bring thee into ſuch a State, as thou will want the Truth to bear witneſs for thee; and though it be hard for Fleſh and Blood (which hath no Kingdom but here) to fall into the hands of Unreaſonable Men, yet it is a more fearfull Thing to fall into the Hands of the Living God; and therefore, let all Lukewarm ones, who are neither hot nor cold, be now awakened, and all that have gone backwards be warned to *return to their Firſt-Love, elſe the Lord will come againſt them, and the Day haſteneth it will divide ſuch their Portion among Hypocrites, except they Repent.*

But

But to touch at some of the Reasons or Arguments, which he that abode not in the Truth himself, useth to draw others into this kind of Treacherous Backsliding.

First, He appears to some to perswade them, That their former Testimony was born more from an imitation of others, than from a work of the Power of God in themselves; and that now, they not finding the Thing required of them, they may leave off their Testimonies, or may do such things as they have denyed formerly; this Snare doth the Enemy make use of in these Days. But mark who it is that he hath caught with it; none but such who sometimes were Low in their Minds, and dare not grieve the Spisit of God in themselves, nor others, but for the Truths-sake could give up all things rather than their Testimony; but in time growing careless, and loose in waiting, lost that subject state, and grew high and exalted in their Minds, above the Cross that should have crucified the betraying Wisdom; and so having lost the true exercise of the Power, and the feeling of the Excellency and Worth of the Truth, they knew not the Requirings of the Lord; and the earthly Mind got up, that placed a greater esteem upon Earthly Things, than upon Things that are Eternal; and so things that once thou offeredst up to God, thou takest again into thy own hand, and so robbest the Lord, and groweſt careful about outward things, as other *Gentiles* are; and to cover thy shame therein, the Enemy then tempts thee to bely the Power that once wrote in thy Heart, and made thee afraid to act against the Light, or to deny the Testimony for God in such things as was manifest, and then saist, thou didst it by imitation; but thou shalt know thy Covering is too narrow in the day that hasteth upon thee.

Another Temptation that the Enemy presenteth, is, That though thou art convinced what to do, or what thou shouldst deny, yet the Tryals are so hard and so many, and Persecutors wax worse and worse, so that thou shalt not hold out to the end; and where he can get entrance with this Bait, he presently causeth an Evil Heart of Unbelief and Doubting to arise, which takes away even the strength which the Lord did give, and so feeblenes doth enter the Mind, and a Spirit of Bondage leads thee

thee to fear again; and then comes the Dispute in thy Heart whether thou shalt stand with the Power of God, in the Obedience, or whether thou shalt fall under that Power that ariseth against God, and his Truth and People; and in this Combate thou hast a subtil Enemy, using many devices to betray thee; and a part in thy self, not yet mortified, that is ready to say, *Pity thy Self, Pity thy Wife, Pity thy Children, and Pity thy Relations*; which it may be sometimes, are all as so many Instruments of Satan to seduce thee, and lead thee into Darkness, that thou mayst not see so great necessity in thy bearing up thy Testimony as indeed there is, nor so great a danger in the contrary as indeed there is.

Oh Friends, at such a time as this, where is there any help but in the Lord? Where canst thou find a Saviour, but in that Light which gives to distinguish of the several Voices? Now it is good for thee to remember, that *if thou walk after the Flesh thou must and shalt surely Dye, and Wither.* In such a time flee, flee to the Lord, wait in his Dread to feel thy strength but renewed at the present, and take no care for strength next Moneth, next Year, or next Tryal; for *God is God, and changeth not, and will be the same to thee in Seven Tryals as in Six, if thou believe and wait on him in Uprightness*; and therefore fear not man, but trust in the Lord all ye that have known and felt his Power, and let not in the Enemy of your Souls by the Door of *Carnal Reasoning*, but keep that shut; and rather consider, how the Enemy makes thee as a rejoycing among his own Children, and strengthens that hope in them of their overcoming all others, as well as thee; which hope is Curst, and shall be Confounded: And consider, that if thou letteſt fall thy Testimony, which thou hast once born for the Lord, thou makeſt the Heart of the Righteous sad, and makeſt their Travail through that Testimony the harder for them, by reason of thy encouraging their Adversaries by the hope aforesaid. And whatever thou doſt, *they must gather on to the End, who will inherit the Crown of Immortality.*

And again consider, It may be that thy backsliding, or cowardly drawing away the Shoulder, may prove a Discouragement

ment to others, and they may stumble in thy stumbling, and fall with thee, and never be able to rise, and so thou bring their Blood also upon thee. Oh, remember also that Servant of the Lord, who could say, *Psal.* 119. 157. *My Persecutors are encreased, but my Heart doth not decline from Testimonies.* That was a noble Spirit becoming the Souldiers of Christ; yea, *though persecuted by Princes*, as he saith, Vers. 161.

Dear Friends, Let your Minds be stirred up to be zealous for the Lord, in this the great day of Controversie with Darkness and its Power. Who hath God to bear Witness to his Name but you? Among whom hath he made it known as among you? Who have given up themselves to the Lord as you have done? Well, *Blessed are they that keep Covenant with the Lord, for they shall see his Glory.*

One more subtil Snare of the Enemy in this matter is in my Heart to mention, that is this, viz. To perswade thee for once, sometimes to do that which the Light hath made manifest, with a purpose afterward to be more Faithful. Oh Friends, In the Name and Fear of the Lord, I exhort and warn you all to take heed of this, for this will prove but a False Confidence, thou wilt find this kind of going out of the Guidance of Truth, to be a dear Out-going to thee; for if ever thou dost return, it will be very hardly, and with bitter Anguish of Soul. Oh! do not tempt the Lord on this wise, *lest it doth prove impossible upon thy sinning willingly to renew or restore thee again by Repentance*; thou wilt have thy *Portage*, but wilt *lose the Blessing*, *though thou may seek it with Tears*; for while thou *wentest out*, *behold*, *thy way became hedged up*, and the *Thorny Nature* gat up in thee, and so thou art *debarred* and *fenced out* from enjoying thy former state; Sin being entered, Death soon follows. Oh remember *Sampson*, who when he had disclosed the Token of a *Nazarite*, in which state he stood in Covenant with God; yet thought to have shaken himself, and to have gone forth in his Strength, as at other times, but was mistaken, *Judg.* 16. 20. *for the Lord was departed from him, though he knew it not.* And so, though thou hast known the Lord's Presence and Power in thy Vessel, yet take heed of letting in that Treacherous Spirit, to lead thee to Unfaithfulness,

and to betray the least of his Trusts and Testimonies committed to thee, though it be but for once, for thereby thou wilt render thy self unworthy to be found a Witness of his Power another time; for the Lord will leave that Vessel, and often doth, and chuseth others Vessels to manifest himself in, that will be more True and Faithful.

So, dear Friends, in true and tender Love I have laid these things before you, that ye might all be stirred up and provoked to Love, and to good Works, that ye might abound in the Grace committed to you; and none of you who have known the Truth, might be entangled with the Wiles of your subtil Enemy, and that you that have begun well, might not lose the things that ye have wrought, but might persevere in well doing till ye have finished your course in peace. And Friends, this is the joy and delight of those that labour among you in the Lord, and hereby is our Hand strengthened, and our Hearts refreshed, when we do find ye such as we desire ye should be, even stedfast in the Truth; and then also do you find us to youward, such as ye desire we should be, even a refreshing in the fellowship of Life unto you, and our God comforts us together, in the mutual joy and comfort of his holy Spirit, working in us and you.

And Friends, I am the more drawn forth at this time to visit you with an Epistle, because the Lord hath given me some sight of his great and dreadful Day, and Workings in it, which is at hand, and greatly hastens, of which I have something to say unto you, that ye may be prepared to stand in his Day, and may behold his wondrous Working among his Enemies, and have fellowship with his Power therein, and may not be dismayed nor driven away in the Tempest, which will be great.

And as concerning those succeeding Times, the Spirit of the Lord hath signified, that they will be Times of Horror and Amazement, to all that have, and yet do reject his Counsel: for as the dayes of his Forbearance, Warning and Inviting, hath been long, so shall his appearance amongst those that have withstood him, be Fierce and Terrible; even so terrible, as

who

who shall abide his coming? for the Lord will work both secretly and openly, and his Arm shall be manifest to his Children in both.

Secretly he shall raise up a continual fretting anguish amongst his Enemies, one against another, so that being vexed and tormented inwardly, they shall seek to make each other miserable, and delight therein for a little season; and then the Prevailer must be prevailed over, and the digger of the Pit must fall therein; and the confidence that men have had one in another shall fail, and they will beguile and betray one another, both by counsel and strength; and as they have banded themselves to break you, whom God hath gathered, so shall they band themselves against one another, to break, to spoil, and destroy one another; and thorow the multitude of their Treacheries, all credit or belief, upon the account of their solemn engagement, shall fail; so that few men shall count themselves, or what is theirs, safe in the hand of his Friend, who hath not chosen his safety and friendship in the pure Light of the unchangeable Truth of God; and all the secret Counsels of the Ungodly shall be brought to nought, sometimes by the means of some of themselves, and sometimes by impossibilities lying in their way, which shall make their Hearts fail of ever accomplishing what they have determined; and in this state shall men fret themselves for a season, and shall not be able to see the Hand that turns against them, but shall turn to fight against one thing, and another, and a third thing, and shall stagger, and reel in Counsel and Judgment, as drunken men that know not where to find the way to rest; and when they do yet stir themselves up against the holy People, and against the holy Covenant of Light, and them that walk in it, they shall but the more be confounded; for they shall be helped with a little help, which all the Ungodly shall not hinder them of, to wit, the secret Arm of the Lord, maintaining their Cause, and raising up a Witness in the very Hearts of their Adversaries to plead their Innocency, and this shall make them yet the more to vex themselves, and to go thorow hard-bestead; for when they shall look upward to their Religion, to their Power, Policy, or Pre-

Isa. 8.

fermens,

ſerments, or Friendſhips, or whatſoever elſe they had truſted in, and relied upon, they ſhall have cauſe to curſe it; and when they look downwards to the Effects produced by all thoſe things, behold, then trouble, and horrour, and vexation takes hold on them, and drives them to Darkneſs; and having no help but what is Earthly, and being out of the knowledge of the mighty overturning Power of the Lord God Almighty, they ſhall diſpair and wear out their dayes with Anguiſh; and beſides all this, the terrible hand of the Lord is, and ſhall be openly manifeſted againſt this ungodly Generation, by bringing grievous and terrible Judgments and Plagues upon them, tumbling down all things in which their Pride and Glory ſtood, and overturning, overturning, even the Foundations of their ſtrength; yea, the Lord will lay waſte the Mountain of the Ungodly, and the ſtrength of the fenced City ſhall fail, and when men ſhall ſay, *We will take refuge in them*, they ſhall become but a Snare, and there ſhall the Sword devour: And when they ſhall ſay, *We will go into the Field, and put truſt in the Number and Courage of our Souldiers*, they ſhall both be taken away; and this Evil alſo will come of the Lord, and his Hand will be ſtretched out ſtill, and ſhall bring Confuſion upon Confuſion, Ruine upon Ruine, and War upon War; and the Hearts of men ſhall be ſtirred in them, and the Nations ſhall be as Waters, into which a Tempeſt, a ſwift Whirlwind is entred, and even as Waves ſwell up to the diſſolution one of another, and breaking one of another, ſo ſhall the ſwellings of People be: And becauſe of the hardſhip and ſorrow of thoſe dayes, many ſhall ſeek and deſire Death rather than Life. *Nahum.* 3. 12, 13.

Ah! my Heart relents and is moved within me in the ſence of theſe things, and much more then I can Write or Declare, which the Lord will do in the Earth, and will alſo make haſte to accompliſh among the Sons of Men, that they may know and confeſs, *That the Moſt High doth Rule in the Kingdoms of Men, and pulleth down and ſetteth up according to his own Will: And this, ſhall men do before ſeven times paſs over them, and ſhall be content to give their Glory unto him that ſits in Heaven.*

But, Oh Friends, while all these things are working, and bringing to pass, repose ye your selves in the Munition of that Rock that all these shakings shall not move, even in the knowledge and feeling of the eternal Power of God, keeping you subjectly given up to his Heavenly Will, and feel it daily to kill and mortifie that which remains in any of you, which is of this World; for the worldly part in any, is the changeable part, and that is up and down, full and empty, joyful and sorrowful, as things go well or ill in the World: For as the Truth is but one, and many are made partakers of its Spirit; so the World is but one, and many are partakers of the Spirit of it; and so many as do partake of it, so many will be straitned and perplexed with it; but they who are single to the Truth, waiting daily to feel the Life and Virtue of it in their Hearts, these shall rejoyce in the midst of Adversity; these shall not have their Hearts moved with fear, nor toffed with anguish because of evil Tyings, *Psal.* 112. 7, 8. Because that which fixeth them remains with them: These shall know their entrance with the Bridegroom, and so be kept from sorrow, though his coming be with a noise; and when a mid-night is come upon man's Glory, yet they being ready and prepared, it will be well with them, and having a true sence of the Power working in themselves, they cannot but have Unity and Fellowship of it in the Earth, and will not at all murmur against what is, nor wish nor will what is not to be; these will be at rest till the Indignation passeth over, and these having no Design to carry on, nor no Party to promote in the Earth, cannot possibly be defeated nor disappointed in their undertakings.

And when you see Divisions and Parties, and Rendings in the Bowels of Nations, and Rumours and Tempests in the Minds of People, then take heed of being moved to this Party or to that Party, or giving your strength to this or that, or counselling this way or that way; but stand single to the Truth of God, in which neither War, Rent nor Division is; and take heed of that part in any of you, which trusts and relies upon any sort of the Men of this World, in the Day of their Prosperity; for the same party will bring you to suffer with them in the time of their Adversity,

which

which will not be long after; for ſtability in that Ground there will be none; but when they ſhall ſay, *Come joyn with us in this or that*, remember you are joyned to the Lord by his pure Spirit, to walk with him in Peace and in Righteouſneſs, and you feeling this, this gathers out of all Buſlings, and Noiſes, and Parties, and Tumults, and leads you to exalt the Standard of Truth and Righteouſneſs, in an innocent Converſation, to ſee who will flow unto that; and this ſhall be a Refuge for many of the Weary, Toſſed and Afflicted Ones in thoſe dayes, and a Shelter for many whoſe Day is not yet over.

So dearly beloved Friends and Brethren, who have believed and known the bleſſed Appearance of the Truth, let not your Hearts be troubled at none of theſe things; oh! let not the things that are at preſent, nor things that are yet to come, move you from ſtedfaſtneſs, but rather double your Diligence, Zeal and Faithfulneſs to the Cauſe of God: for they that know the Work wrought in themſelves, they ſhall reſt in the Day of Trouble, *Yea, though the Fig-tree fail, and the Vine brings not forth, and the Labour of the Olive-tree ceaſeth, and the Fields yield no Meat, and Sheep be cut off from the Fold, and there be no Bullock in the Stall; yet then mayeſt thou rejoyce in the Lord, and ſing Praiſes to the God of thy Salvation.* Hab. 3. 16, 17.

And how near theſe days are to this poor Nation, few know; and therefore the Cry of the Lord is very loud unto its Inhabitants, through his Servants and Meſſengers, that they would prize their time while they have it, leſt they be overturned, waſted and laid deſolate before they are aware; and before Deſtruction come upon them, and there be no remedy, as it hath already done upon many.

Oh LONDON, LONDON! That thou and thy Rulers would have conſidered, and hearkened and heard, in the Day of thy Warnings and Invitations, and not have perſiſted in thy Rebellion, till the Lord was moved againſt thee, to cut off the Thouſands and Multitudes from thy Streets, and the preſſing throngings of People from thy Gates, & then to deſtroy and ruin

thy Streets alſo, and lay deſolate thy Gates, when thou thoughteſt to have repleniſhed them again.

And, Oh! ſaith my Soul, that thy Inhabitants would yet be warned, and perſwaded to Repent and Turn to the Lord, by putting away every one the Evil that is in their Hearts, againſt the Truth in your ſelves, and againſt thoſe that walk in it, before a greater Deſolation and Deſtruction overtake you.

Oh! what ſhall I ſay to prevail with *London*, and with its Inhabitants! The Lord hath Called aloud, he hath Roared out of *Zion* unto them, but many of them have not hearkened at all, nor conſidered at all.

Well, Oh my Friends! (and thou, oh my Soul!) return to your Reſt, dwell in the Pavillion of the Houſe of your God, and my God, and ſhelter your ſelves under the ſhadow of his Wings, where ye ſhall be Witneſſes of his Doings, and ſee his STRANGE ACT brought to paſs, and ſhall not be hurt therewith, nor diſmayed.

Oh my Friends! in the Bowels of dear and tender Love have I ſignified theſe things unto you, that ye might ſtand armed with the whole Armour of God, Cloathed in Righteouſneſs, and your Feet ſhod with the Preparation of the Goſpel of Peace; and freely given up in all things to the diſpoſing of the Lord, who will deliver us, not by Might, nor by Sword, nor Spear, but by his own eternal inviſible Arm, will he yet ſave us and deliver us, and get himſelf a Name by preſerving of us: and we ſhall yet live to praiſe him who is worthy of Glory, of Honour and Renown, from the riſing of the Sun to the ſetting of the ſame, now and forever, *Amen*, *Amen*, ſaith my Soul.

A Postscript.

Dear Friends and Brethren;

I Have something farther in my heart to communicate unto you, in dear and tender Love, and in desire of your Preservation out of the Snares of your Adversary; And that is, To exhort you all to dwell in the pure Judgment of the Truth, which is a Defence upon your Glory, and let none bereave you of this under any pretence whatsoever; but as you come to a true feeling of the Life in your selves, to which alone the certain Judgment appertaineth, so let this Life have freedom, and stop it not from judging all that which is at enmity with the Life, and tends to the hurting the true Plant of God; for I have seen a Harm hath come to many who have parted with their Judgment, and so have become unarmed, and the Enemy hath prevailed upon them, (under a pretended Tenderness) to permit or suffer such things as were hurtful to themselves or others; and though the Lord hath given them Judgment and Discerning in the Matter, yet were bereaved of that Gift, and so by little and little became beguiled.

Oh dear Friends! consider these dayes are perilous times, and it is needful for every one to watch in that same Eternal Light to which you were first turned, that by its Righteous Judgment ye may be preserved from every thing in your selves that appears contrary to that precious Life of which you have tasted: And when you have so done, then to take heed, that the Enemy do not do that by an Instrument which (through your watchfulness in the Light) he could not do without; and all beware of that affected Tenderness

derneſs, that cryes out, Be tender to all, and pray for all, and mind the Good in all, and love all, and judge none; but leave Judgment to God, &c. *I ſay, Heed not the plauſible words of that Spirit, which being guilty, to ſave its own Head from a ſtroke, would bereave you of your Judgment, which God hath given you; and is indeed truly his Judgment, and is to be adminiſtred in his Wiſdom and Power, for the cleanſing and keeping clean his Sanctuary; for ſuch as have no Judgment in their goings, are they that know not the true way of Peace, but make them crooked Paths,* he that goeth in them ſhall not know Peace, *Iſa. 59. 8.*

But ſome may ſay, Was not Chriſt Meek and Lowly? and ought not all to be like unto him?

'Tis true, my Friends; but there is a difference between the Seed's Suffering and its Reigning, and there are times for them both: and when it doth pleaſe God to permit the Hour and Power of Darkneſs in the open Perſecutors, to exalt it ſelf againſt his Seed and People, by Perſecution, or ſuch like; they are led by his Spirit to appear in Meekneſs and Quietneſs, as a Sheep before the Shearer. But what is this to ſuffering bad and perverſe Spirits, that appear under pretence of the Truth and yet are out of the Truth, and Enemies to its proſperity, ſtriving to exalt and ſet up another thing inſtead of the Truth? Such as theſe the Lord doth not require you to uſe only Patience and Meekneſs towards; but if that will not reclaim them, they muſt know the Judgment of the Truth, and you in it muſt ſtand over them; for in this caſe the Day of the Exaltation of Chriſt is come, and God is crowning Truth with Dominion over every falſe Spirit, and corrupt Practice thereof.

And therefore, Dear Friends, eye the Lord in his gu-

ings,

light forth, and as you feel his Life in you to witness against any evil and corrupt thing or practice, use Plainness, and keep Sincerity, and turn not Judgment backwards; for that which is unwilling to be judged, and cryes out, Judge none, leave all to God, &c. *the same will take upon it both to judge and rule, but not in the Wisdom of God; and those that cry out so much for Tenderness, & against Truth's Judgment, the same are most dangerous to be drawn out from the patient suffering in the Spirit of Christ Jesus, when they ought to appear in the most Meekness, and to appear rough & wrathful in the striving & fighting Nature, and are most apt to be tempted into a Spirit of Revenge, as hath been seen by sad Experience; for they that lose the exercise of that by which all should keep Dominion over Deceit, they lose that strength by which they should be enabled to suffer all things for the sake of* Christ Jesus.

So, Dear Friends, in that which keeps out the Defiler and the Betrayer, all wait upon the Lord, that you may have your Armour on, and be fortified with the Strength, with the Might, and with the Judgments of God, and keep that under in every place which under Pretence of Tenderness and Forbearance would make void the Testimony of Truth, or make the Offence of the Cross to cease in any thing wherein you have been instructed from the beginning, that the Lord may behold and see Judgment established, and be pleased, Isa. 59. The Lord looked, and there was no Judgment, and it displeased him; *For thereby Deceit got up, which with it is to be kept down.*

So the Lord God of Power and Wisdom preserve you faithful, and fitted for every good Word & Work; the Strong to watch over the Weak, in singleness; and the Weak to be subject to the Strong in the Lord, that so the pure Plant of Righteousness and Truth may grow in and among you all, to his Praise that hath called you: To whom be Glory and Honour forever, *Amen.*

S. C.

S. C.